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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN ELECTION RESULTS A "SURPRISE" TO
EGYPT: QUARTET, EGYPT MUST ENGAGE

REF: CAIRO 441

Classified by ECPO Minister Counselor Michael Corbin for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) During a January 26 meeting with poloff, MFA Cabinet staff member responsible for the peace process portfolio, Ezzedine Shukry-Fisher, and Palestinian Affairs Office Director Randa Labaib, expressed surprise that Hamas had done so well in the latest parliamentary elections. Noting that the MFA was not the only GOE entity to have been wrong in its predictions, Shukry-Fisher shared that Egyptian Intelligence, too, had miscalculated on final results: "their people (i.e., EGIS staff) on the ground had led headquarters to believe the results would be much different." Shukry-Fisher said the GOE attached particular importance to the upcoming January 30 Quartet statement since it would signify the direction in which the peace process would be taken and lock in respective national positions of the Quartet members. Shukry-Fisher noted that Egypt intended to engage closely with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in coming days/weeks to ensure the peace process did not fall victim to the political shock of a potential Hamas government.

2. (C) Egypt would await the official release by the Palestinian Election Commission of its preliminary election results, he added, before publicly commenting. Furthermore, Egypt would be carefully studying the public positions taken by Quartet members and European Capitals. Shukry-Fisher predicted "two weeks of confusion" while election results and political realignments are sorted out. Nevertheless, the GOE would certainly be engaging with all concerned parties in how to move the peace process forward under new circumstances.
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